

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,
As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

To be absolutely clear, comprehensive campaign coverage does NOT mean spending airtime quibbling about how well each candidate is "playing the game", and treating Political Office as if it were nothing more than a SuperBowl; and we, the people, are not voting to hire the best qualified applicant for the job, but placing bets on a meaningless popularity contest. Are we content to sit back and let the reality shows represent true democracy in action?

In addition, unbiased coverage does NOT include choosing a topic for discussion based on the advertiser's needs, then pitting diametrically opposed pundits against each other to argue about who paid for which attack ad this time.

The voting public has a right to the truth about the issues. We have a right to know each candidate's voting record on the issues, regardless of what their campaign strategists would like us to hear.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,
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